

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

## BUREAU OF EDUCATION.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES INVOLVING THE  
SCHOOLS IN WAR TIME.

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## THE SCHOOLS.

School officials in all parts of the country are asking the Commissioner of Education and others for advice as to what the schools should do to render the utmost service of which they are capable during the war emergency. They desire to know specifically whether they can be most helpful by shortening the daily or weekly or annual school session, by closing down entirely, by continuing as in the past, or by increasing school activities in various ways.

With admirable loyalty and patriotism, the schools stand ready and eager to do their full duty, whatever that may be. The greatest need at the present time is for some authoritative statement which shall make the path of duty and service plain.

It may be noted that in 1915-16, the latest year for which figures are available, there were in public and private high schools in the United States 733,856 boys and 877,340 girls; total, 1,611,196. (Report, Com. of Ed., 1917, Vol. II, Table 1, p. 513; Table 15, p. 527.) Of the 733,000 boys, it has been estimated that approximately 500,000 were 16 years of age and over.

## THE ADMINISTRATION.

The entire spirit of the Administration in Washington is, and has been from the beginning, that the war should in no way be used as an excuse for giving the children of the country any less education, in quantity or quality, than they otherwise would have had, but, on the contrary, that the schools should do everything possible to increase their efficiency, to the end that the children now in the schools may at the conclusion of their course be even better qualified than ever before to take up the duties and responsibilities of life. Both the present demands of the war emergency and the prospective demands of the necessary readjustments inevitably to follow emphasize the need of providing in full measure for the education of all the people.

The President has repeatedly called the attention of the Nation to the urgent necessity of this special form of conservation. He has

particularly urged young people graduating from the high schools to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the colleges and technical schools, "to the end that the country may not lack an adequate supply of trained men and women," and he assures young people who are not called to active military service that "by pursuing their courses (in school) with earnestness and diligence they also are preparing themselves for valuable service to the Nation." (July 20, 1917, letter to Secretary Lane.)

Later the President again expressed his "very urgent concern that none of the educational processes of the country should be interrupted any more than is absolutely unavoidable during the war." (Jan. 18, 1918, letter to the department of superintendence, N. E. A.)

### CONFERENCE.

In response to the conviction that the time had come for the formulation of a definite statement which might have the weight of a Government announcement of policy with reference to the schools in war time, Secretary Lane early in February took the initiative in calling a conference of representatives of the several Departments at Washington most directly concerned for the purpose of considering the matter. These included the War Department, the Navy Department, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor, the United States Civil Service Commission, and the Department of the Interior through the Bureau of Education.

As the result of several conferences the following statement has been prepared and formally adopted as expressing the attitude of these Departments. As such it is commended to the school officers and teachers of the country for their careful consideration.

This statement includes a brief outline of the most pressing needs as seen by each Department concerned, followed by a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

### THE NEED IN AGRICULTURE.

Before the opening of the war there were in the United States about 6,000,000 farmers, and about an equal number of farm laborers. There are farm labor difficulties to be overcome in many parts of the Union. In some sections the situation is acute.

Aside from casual work, chores, and the like, which might be done outside of school hours, the labor of boys under 14 years of age is not a vital factor on the farm. City boys, without farm experience, are not generally useful under 16 years of age. In some lines of farm work unskilled boys can be used in part, under skilled direction. In some lines of work a bright, strong boy can step in, without previous experience, and be of use almost from the first day. There are, of

course, some kinds of farm work that a boy without farm experience can not be expected to do without training. In any case, intelligence, good health, and good physical development are essential for useful service on the farm.

One of the urgent needs on the farm to-day is for capable women to help with the housework. Without such help many farms could not take on additional farm laborers, even if they were available, because of the added labor involved in providing meals and lodging.

#### THE NEED IN THE ARMY AND NAVY.

The Army and Navy do not want, and can not use, boys under 18 years of age, nor boys nor men of any age who are not strong and well-developed physically. So far as the Army and Navy are concerned, there is nothing more important that the schools can do than to keep going at full capacity, and at the same time to emphasize in every possible way their work in physical education. High-school boys will render the best service of which they are capable by remaining in school until completion of the high-school course.

As soon as the Army is able to announce definitely its need of men possessing certain technical and trade qualifications, it will be necessary for large numbers of young men 18 years of age and over to respond by taking the training courses that may be provided to prepare them in the shortest possible time. But, in the meantime, nothing can possibly be gained by boys doing otherwise than to continue in school, laying the very best possible foundation for such subsequent training. If they are wanted, they will be called.

If the schools will carefully select boys having suitable physical development and other necessary qualifications, prepare them for the various branches of agricultural work, and send them out to service on the farms under proper auspices during the approaching vacation, they will undoubtedly be offering greater relief in the present emergency than would be possible by attempting to carry on any work immediately under the Army or Navy.

Vigorous physical training under discipline furnishes excellent preparation for civil or military usefulness later on. Such value as formal military drill in the high schools may have, however, is more likely to be through keeping the boys satisfied to remain in school than as a contribution to the immediate military strength of the country.

#### THE NEED IN CIVIL SERVICE.

There is a strong demand for clerks, stenographers, and typewriters, but the places can not be filled by boys and girls under 18 years of age. No advantage would accrue to the civil service in any way by shutting down the schools or by curtailing school facilities.



Many civil service positions have been filled by drawing workers from commercial and industrial houses, and also by drawing teachers from the schools. All of the positions thus made vacant must be filled from some source. Therefore, schools could undoubtedly render a much-needed service by organizing classes to train stenographers, typewriters, clerks, and secretaries.

#### THE NEED IN INDUSTRY.

Many industries and commercial establishments could use capable boys and girls for various kinds of service, but Government officials maintain that no emergency exists which justifies proposing any relaxation of the laws safeguarding the working condition of young people.

Still more serious labor shortages in industry are anticipated, but boys and girls under 18 years of age should not be used to make up these shortages any more than can possibly be helped. It is easier to provide approved working conditions on the farm than in the mill or factory.

#### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Conditions in different sections of the country are so diverse that no detailed policy will be uniformly applicable. Only general policies and principles may be adopted for the country as a whole.

#### THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

2. There appears to be nothing in the present or prospective war emergency to justify curtailment in any respect of the sessions of the elementary schools, or of the education of boys and girls under 14 years of age, and nothing which should serve as an excuse for interference with the progressive development of the school system. Teachers and pupils may be encouraged to find ways of performing in the schools some service having war value, such as activities connected with the Junior Red Cross, war-garden work, Boy Scouts, war-thrift work, and the like. Opportunities should be found to introduce into the school activities having real educational value, which at the same time connect the public schools with the ideals of service and self-sacrifice actuating our people, and bring home to the consciousness of teachers, pupils, and parents the essential unity of the Nation in this great crisis.

3. In view of the progress that has been made in this country in the enactment of compulsory education legislation, it is assumed at the outset that there is no question that in the country and villages all girls under 14 years of age, and all boys under 12, might well continue

in school through the summer, wherever the condition of the school funds makes this at all possible.

4. In the cities there would be no interference with the supply of needed labor if all children under 14 continue in school to the end of the regular session, and through the summer as well, and there would be but little interference if all children under 16 continue in school. With reference to boys and girls over these ages, the recommendations which follow indicate certain directions in which it is believed the school program may be modified when necessary to meet emergencies.

#### THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

5. One of the places in which there appears to be immediate demand for modification of the high-school program is in respect to the need for agricultural labor. Much valuable service can be rendered by carefully selecting and training boys to assist in meeting this demand. It can not be too strongly urged, however, that each pupil's case be considered individually, and no pupil should be excused from school for this purpose except with the written consent of the parents, to accept specified employment for a definite term, under responsible supervision by the school or by other approved agencies of the conditions of employment.

6. It would be helpful in cities, and especially in industrial communities, if, for boys and girls over 14 years of age in or out of school, certain definite courses could be introduced looking toward a cooperative half-time plan of school attendance and employment throughout the year.

#### IN GENERAL.

7. In general, it is believed that wherever school boards can find the means, the present emergency is an opportune time for readjusting the schools on an all-year-round basis, with a school of 48 weeks, divided into four quarters of 12 weeks each. The schools would then be in continuous operation, but individual teachers and pupils would have the option of taking one quarter off at prearranged periods for needed change.

8. If it is not practicable for the schools to change at once to the all-year-round program, a much-needed service can be rendered in many localities by organizing special summer and evening classes to train young people for the civil service, and to train stenographers, typewriters, clerks, and secretaries for the commercial world. In many communities numbers of adult women will be found who are free to avail themselves of special training to fit themselves for various kinds of positions in office and clerical work, taking temporarily the places of men called to the colors or to other employment.

9. Some schools should consider the possibility of arranging a schedule for certain groups of students having a definite prospect of service, in accordance with which the summer months would be spent in school, leaving the students free to work on the farms during planting time in the spring and again during harvest time in the fall. In still other cases, particularly in the smaller communities, time may be secured for farm work by omitting the usual spring vacation, by holding school on Saturdays, and otherwise speeding up, and thus completing the term's studies some weeks in advance of the usual date for closing the school.

10. Special programs of the type suggested in the preceding paragraph should be reserved in general for individual students or specially selected groups of students who have definite plans for proper use of the time thus taken from the school. In no case can justification be found for the general shortening of the school term in the expectation that *some* students *may* find places of useful service.

11. In response to definite requests from Government agencies, schools should be used from time to time for specific preparation of individuals for immediate service.

12. Boys and girls should be urged, as a patriotic duty, to remain in school to the completion of the high-school course, and in increasing numbers to enter upon college and university courses, especially in technical and scientific lines, and normal school courses, to meet the great need for trained men and women.

APPROVED.

*For the War Department,*

NEWTON D. BAKER, *Secretary.*

*For the Navy Department,*

JOSEPHUS DANIELS, *Secretary.*

*For the Department of Agriculture,*

DAVID F. HOUSTON, *Secretary.*

*For the Department of Labor,*

WILLIAM B. WILSON, *Secretary.*

*For the U. S. Civil Service Commission,*

JOHN A. McILHENNY, *Chairman.*

*For the Department of the Interior,*

FRANKLIN K. LANE, *Secretary.*

P. P. CLAXTON, *Commissioner of Education.*



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